

Lesson Plan: Exploring County Ordinances

In this lesson, students examine county ordinances and develop an understanding of the degree to which county government serves and regulates citizens. Students become more familiar with the services and actions the county government provides and performs.

Connection to POS: Standard 8.1

- ◆ *Students will explain the responsibilities of a citizen in the family, school, community, state, nation, and the world. (8.1.2.a)*
- ◆ *Students will realize the expectation that responsible citizens become informed about and involved with contemporary and continuing issues in civil life. (8.1.3.a.)*
- ◆ *Students will describe how individuals participate in the political process by....communicating with government officials, supporting and working with political parties and interest groups....and attending meetings of governing bodies. (8.1.3.c)*

SOL Standards: 7.2.b, 7.3.a, 7.4.e, 7.9.a



Objectives

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- ◆ evaluate the responsibility of county government to enact and enforce local ordinances.
- ◆ assess the desirability of government involvement in everyday life and begin to answer for themselves the question of whether the government should be more or less involved in our lives.
- ◆ describe competing interests involved in making local political policy.



Materials

- ◆ Student Handout –Some Fairfax County Ordinances



Time Needed

- ◆ 45 minutes (Many possible extensions could make this lesson the basis for a much longer activity.)



Procedures

1. When students arrive, have them complete the following bellringer which can be listed on the board or overhead: "There ought to be a law that...."
2. Have students complete the sentence in their notebooks. Ask for volunteers to share their responses and discuss the wide variety of responses that were generated.
3. Begin by asking students to identify local "rules" of which they are aware (outside of school rules.) Chances are they will be largely unaware of the nature and volume of such rules. At this point, review the definition of "ordinance" as listed in the glossary that students should already have.
4. Distribute Student Handout – Some Fairfax County Ordinances and read the ordinances as a group. Students should highlight those that they feel to be most essential to maintaining order in the local community.
5. Have students think-pair-share to evaluate one ordinance assigned by the teacher. Students should be prepared to answer the following questions about their ordinance:
 - Who might be likely to introduce such an ordinance?
 - What are the positive effects such an ordinance would have on a community?
 - Are there any downsides that you can see to this ordinance?
 - Who would be most likely to oppose such an ordinance?
6. Lead a class discussion allowing pairs to compare and defend their opinions about the various ordinances. As time allows, encourage the pairs to take opposing sides over the ordinance they just examined and present them to the class as though they were lobbying the Board of Supervisors. Be sure to bring closure to the activity by addressing the following:
 - Which ones seemed most important to the students?
 - Which ordinance seemed least useful or necessary?

Make sure the students grasp the concept of competing freedoms and the government's efforts to balance them.



Assessment

- ♦ As a journal assignment, students should write a short essay answering the question, "Should the government be more or less involved in our daily lives?" This will be an excellent exercise to refer back to when beginning a unit on political parties and liberal v. conservative ideologies.



Extensions

- ◆ Students could follow local newspapers for items of interest or potential problems in the community. What ordinances might be passed to address these concerns? Allow some time each day in the week to discuss the articles or have students respond to them in the notebook/journal. Students could also maintain a scrapbook over the course of the quarter in which they collect such articles and track the progress of any proposed legislation.
- ◆ Have students attend a county board of supervisors hearing to broaden their understanding of the dynamics of board work.



Differentiations

- ◆ Instead of writing an entire essay, students could complete a chart listing the pros and cons of government involvement in their lives.
- ◆ Political cartoons could be drawn to convey the same ideas that a student might include in the essay listed above.



Interdisciplinary Connections

- ◆ If students are studying persuasive writing in English, have them compose an ordinance of their own that deals with a problem they see in the county. Help them refine it to present to their own supervisor. Lobby the supervisor **IN WRITING** to introduce it to the entire board. Follow up with phone calls as necessary.
- ◆ Have students imagine that they work for the county's Office of Public Affairs. Assign them to write a press release about one of the new ordinances created at today's board meeting, keeping in mind that the ordinance will probably please some but make others unhappy.